

NW Montana Joint Information Center

Fire Update

August 29, 2003, 10:00 AM



Center Hours 6 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Phone # (406) 755-3910 www.fs.fed.us/nwacfire

The Eastside Reservoir Road #38 and Westside Reservoir Road #895 along the of Hungry Horse Reservoir is CLOSED. Middle Fork River from Bear Creek to West Glacier is closed. Stanton Lake area is reopened. Highway 2 is NOT closed. Stage II Restrictions are still in effect. Going to the Sun Road is still open.

Blackfoot Lake Complex Includes the Beta Lake-Doris Ridge fires, Ball fire, and the Blackfoot lake complex of fires located on Flathead National Forest, south of Hungry Horse; Hungry Horse, MT. Fire Information (406) 755-3910, 387-4609.

Size: Beta Lake – 872 acres
Size: Doris Ridge- 2416 acres
Size: Blackfoot Lake Fires – 1,452 acres
Size: Ball Fire – 314 acres

total personnel: 786
For entire complex

containment: 0%
containment: 0%
containment: 0%
containment: 5%

Status: Frequent torching, short uphill runs, and some backing were observed on the fires. The spots on the Eastside of the Reservoir were contained by crews and hoselay. **Road #38 (Eastside Reservoir Road) and Road #895 (Westside Reservoir Road) from Highway 2 in Hungry Horse along the Reservoir is closed until further notice. Campgrounds along the Westside and Eastside of the reservoir are also closed.**

Outlook: As a result of yesterday's fire activity, a burnout is planned for the Beta Fire to clean up unburned fuels. Hoselay and direct line will be used in Fawn Creek on the north side of the Beta Fire. Spot fires on the eastside of the Reservoir will be mopped up. Resources will recon and assess potential control lines on all fires in the Blackfoot Lake area. Crews and equipment will construct indirect lines east of the Ball Fire.

Closures extend along Forest Road #895 (Westside of Reservoir Road) from its junction with US Highway 2 south along the west side of Hungry Horse Reservoir to the Spotted Bear Ranger District boundary with the Bob Marshall Wilderness. It then extends west through the Swan Lake Ranger District and then heads north following the Forest boundary all the way to the town of Hungry Horse. This closure includes the Jewel Basin Hiking Area. A public meeting will be held nightly at the Canyon Elementary School at 7:00 pm.

Crazy Horse Fire Located on private and Flathead National Forest land, 3 miles northwest of Lindbergh Lake, MT. Fire Information: (406) 754-4620, (406) 754-2295, (406) 754-2291, (406) 754-3137

Size: 10,200 acres (12 acres growth since 8/28) total personnel: 477 containment: 50%

Status: The fire continued its slow surface spread with some isolated torching in the morning with an increase in torching in the afternoon as the winds increased. Transfer of command from Vail's team to Chrisman's team occurred at 6:00 am this morning and was very successful.

Outlook: Determining how to secure the west flank in the Mission Mountain Wilderness using a confine, contain, and suppress tactic will be implemented. Patrolling and improving existing fire line and mop up. Rehabilitation on fire lines outside of the wilderness will begin. A **community meeting will be held tomorrow, August 30th at 6:30 pm at Swan Valley Elementary School**.

All mandatory evacuations and fire activity advisories have been lifted. Upper Kraft Creek road remains closed due to fire traffic. Current Forest Service area closure remains in effect. All areas east of Hwy 83, the Hwy 83 corridor and Holland Lake Campground and Recreation Facilities are open.

LITTLE SALMON COMPLEX Located in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, 47 miles southeast of Kalispell, MT. Fire Information: (406) 758-5376

Size: 43,068 acres est. (2,968 acres growth since 8/28) **total personnel:** 72 **containment** N/A

Status: A Fire Use Management team is set up at the Spotted Bear Ranger District. The Little Salmon complex now includes 15 active fires: 9 Wildland Fire Use fires (Little Salmon, Pagoda Mtn., Lime Creek, Independence Park, Salmon Point, Casey Creek, South Spud, Little Hammer, & Casey II) and 6 suppression fires that are more than 15 acres include Mid Creek, Black Bear Mtn., Some Creek, Una Mtn., Molly Creek, and Leota. Fires that have burned together are as follows: Mid Creek burned together with Black Bear Mtn.; This fire then burned together with the Some Creek and Una Mtn. fires. Flame lengths of 1-3' in the surface fuels were seen. This extreme fire behavior was observed until about 2:00 am on the Some, Una, and Bartlett Fires. It was confirmed that they had burned together and will be referred to as the Barsomuna Fire. Some active fire spread in the areas exposed to the winds were observed, but fire behavior was moderated due to higher humidities and lower temperatures that were forecast. The wind shift that was predicted did not occur in this area. Westerly winds were observed at Leota in late afternoon. Schrenk's FAST Team reviewed Complex Operations at Spotted Bear Ranger Station. They then conferred with the Southern California Team 3, a Type I IMT, regarding the Mid Fire. The structure protection system was tested at Spotted Bear Ranger Station. The Leota Fire moved to the east and south along a ridge system, nearly doubling in size since it was last mapped. Fire continues to move toward Big Prairie on three sides. The protection system was improved by additional blivets and attack lines.

Outlook: Monitoring of the fire spread will continue on all the fires. Monitoring of the Mid Fire will be done from the ground at Meadow Creek trailhead area. Structure protection at Big Prairie will continue as fire moves closer. Hot spots near the bridge at Salmon Forks will be extinguished. Transition will be begin with members of Weldon's group coming from Augusta.

The existing closure from the northern section of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex Area, South Fork Flathead River Drainage from Mid Creek (3 miles south of Meadow Creek Trailhead), will be expanded to include the remainder of the wilderness portion of the South Fork Flathead River drainage on Spotted Bear Ranger District. This closes Gorge Creek Trail 218, Lion Creek Pass Trail 25, the rest of Little Salmon Trail 29, and the rest of East Side Trail 80. Up the Spotted Bear River drainage Spotted Bear River Trail 83, Trails 87, 173, 177, 359, 92, 143, 90, 229, 447, as well as the upper end of White River Trail 112 and 176 are also closed.

ROBERT FIRE Located on Flathead National Forest and Glacier National Park, 8 miles north of Columbia Falls, MT. Fire Information (406) 892-0946, 892-0948.

Size: 46,448 (450 acres increase since 8/26) **total personnel:** 601 **containment:** 70%

Status: Slow burning ground fires and some occasional torching were observed. Transition between Ferguson's Type I IMT and Cable's Type I IMT began yesterday. Cable's team assumed command at 6:00 pm.

Outlook: Continuation of rehabilitation on the cooler portions of the fire. Mop up and holding of the fire lines. Monitoring of the northeast area of the fire within Glacier National Park which has open line. North Fork Road is open from Glacier Rim to Polebridge. No stopping along the road and all roads that junction or are adjacent with the North Fork road will remain closed. The area just beyond Polebridge and the Red Meadows road remain closed to all except residents, emergency personnel and firefighters. A second closure is in effect above Polebridge restricting access to the river access point and Glacier National Park. The travel restrictions are in effect due to the concern for public safety.

Glacier National Park: The Middle Fork of the Flathead River from Bear Creek access point to West Glacier is closed. Trails and campgrounds in the park's North Fork area, north from Lake McDonald and west of the Continental Divide, and the Camas and Hay Creek Roads remain temporarily closed until further notice. Boating on Lake McDonald is temporarily prohibited with the exception of boat tours on the DeSmet, transporting fire crews, and Kelly Camp residents, due to aerial fire suppression. Fish Creek, Avalanche and Big Creek campgrounds remain closed. All trails in Walton are closed. Openings and closures are dependent upon fire behavior. Lake McDonald Lodge is now open to the public. Sperry Chalet is closed for the season. Trails in the Sperry Chalet area are also closed. **Call Glacier National Park for more detailed information 406-888-7801.**

TRAPPER CREEK COMPLEX (Trapper Creek fire, Paul Bunyan fire, Trout Creek and Wolf Gun Fire)

Located in Glacier National Park, 45 miles north of Kalispell, MT. Fire Information: (406) 892-0946, 892-0948.

**Complex size – 26,176 (556 report since 8/26) Trapper Creek: size – 17,830 acres, Containment - 65%
Wolf Gun: size – 8,729 acres, Containment - 50% 3) total personnel: 21**

Status: This fire is being monitored exclusively by air with no ongoing suppression actions. Smoldering, creeping, short upslope surface fire runs and torching were observed yesterday. Morning Star Fire, between Two Medicine and Cutbank, is contained and mop-up is being done but crews are still monitoring. Pitamakin Pass- Atlantic Creek trail is closed. Morning Star campground is closed.

Outlook: All fires remain in a monitoring status and aerial monitoring of fire activity will continue. Extremely dry fuels, inaccessible terrain, and the remote nature of this fire preclude containment and confinement. Poor visibility and smoke inversions are hampering the use of aviation resources.

WEDGE CANYON FIRE Located on the Flathead National Forest and Glacier National Park, 20 miles east of Eureka, MT and six miles south of the Canadian border. Fire Information (801) 413-0525.

Size: 46,920 (794 acres increase since 8/28) **total personnel:** 476 **containment:** 66%

Status: Structure protection is in place and sprinklers are maintained in the Trail Creek area. Aggressive use of helicopters were used in the northern and southeastern areas. Dozer line was continued to the west in the southeastern area. Progress towards tying the handline into the old Red Bench burn was made. Engine crews assisted in the southeastern area in prepping the Kintla Lake Road as a contingency line. Residents are reminded that evacuations remain in effect from Moose Creek to the Canadian Border. Teepee Creek Road is closed due to snags. Structure protection measures continue.

Outlook: Continued flanking action is planned in the southeastern portion of the fire. This includes improving hand lines and tying into the old Red Bench burn area. Mopup was done on two spot fires south of AkoKala Creek. A burnout operation is planned for the southeastern portion of the fire. Continuation of constructing line in the Trail Creek area to the west with aggressive helicopter support. Mop up in the north eastern area continues. All other areas of the fire will continue to be patrolled and mopped up as well as mop up around structures. **Public meeting at Polebridge every night at 8:00 pm. Community meeting at Larry Wilson's place at 9:00 am every other day starting 8/25.**

Fires on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest Call (208) 765-7217. The Gold Chest Fire is located two miles southeast of Murray, Idaho. This fire is considered 100% contained and crews continue to mop up.

Other Fires on the Flathead National Forest/Glacier National Park

- **High Fire:** 120 acres. On the Flathead NF, in the SE corner of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Air suppression activities used water to activity down. This fire will be monitored today.
- **Middle Fork Complex:** 2,755 acres. In Glacier National Park, approximately 5 miles east of West Glacier. The complex consists of the Belton, Center and Harrison fires. Smoke from the Blackfoot Lake Complex hampered air operations in this area. Structure protection and aerial suppression work was done on the Belton and Harrison Fires. Continuation of structure protection, aerial suppression, monitoring and recon on the fire will continue.
- **Rampage Complex:** 9,421 acres. In Glacier National Park, southern edge of the Park. The complex consists of the Rampage, Riverview 1, Riverview 2, and Double Mountain 2 fires. Surface fire with occasional torching was observed. Smoke shading from the other fires subdued fire activity. Assessments for structure protection are being conducted. Smoldering with occasional flare-ups occurred once slopes were exposed to the winds. This caused some short runs to occur. The Double Mountain Fire made a significant run late yesterday, moving primarily to the east into the Glacier National Park and away from residents along Hwy 2. All fires within the complex are being closely monitored.